

# In Senegal, the anger is brewing against the plundering of fish "foreign" vessels

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Dozens of canoes dance a ballet of colorful beachfront Mbour, 80 km south of Dakar on Monday July 4. Fellows in yellow raincoat, water up to his chest, wear on their heads heavy boxes of fish cats. On the beach turned into a permanent auction and under the canopy of concrete fishing pier in an oppressive smell, hundreds of women and men spread octopus, crustaceans and sea bream under a blazing sun. Some, however, return empty-handed.

*"It was not a good day for fishing,"* observes Abdoulaye Ndao, owner of a boat 22 meters: *"It was not so long ago, we went back with full thread, but there are fewer less fish."*

A fact confirmed by Gaoussou Gueye, the Association for the advancement and empowerment of actors artisanal Mbour: *"This spring, the lack of fish has led to serious food problems and falling incomes fishermen had. rec health, education."*

The origin of this scarcity fleet on everyone's lips: the *"Russian ships"*. Is twenty-one giant freezer trawlers flying the flag abroad (Russian for eight of them), which the Minister of Maritime Economy, Khourachi Thiam, sold fishing licenses to small pelagic - sardine, sardine, mackerel, horse mackerel ...

A challenge for Senegalese fishermen, while stocks are already suffering from overfishing. *"These small pelagics is the basis of our food security,"* insists Mr. Gueye.

In Senegal, artisanal fishing canoes and 15,000 account for 80% of the catch. Fishermen, wholesalers, processors ... the sector live more than 600 000 people. Came Dakar Kayar, St. Louis or Joal, this little world met in Mbour, July 4, to say its concern and anger. *"We do not have enough fish for sale to foreign vessels,"* summarizes Abdoulaye Ndao.

Loaded, in his khaki uniform, their carry the word of the State, the prefect of Mbour Alyoune Badara Diop, tried to be reassuring: *"There is no threat to the resource, fishing trawlers in high seas areas inaccessible to the canoes."*

A joke for Bara Sow, the representative of the Independent Union of Seafarers: *"These trawlers are constantly making inroads into areas reserved for artisanal fishing authorities are alert, but nothing happens."* Government has a Another argument: if it does not sell these licenses are neighbors who will pocket all the manna benches that migrate along the Africa of the West. These waters are among the most fish in the world, attracting hundreds of European vessels, Russia and Asia. A gold rush of the sea, so that there are: across the globe, overfishing depleted the resource. *"Fish has become a strategic issue and geopolitics,"* Stephan Beaucher analysis, NGOs Ocean2012, for which *"race for fish could end in war fish"*.

Similarly they buy in Africa thousands of hectares of farmland, the world's largest economies are competing for access to the oceans of the continent. This grab for a bargain price - 7.6 million for the twenty-one licenses Senegal, 24 per tonne of fish - fueling suspicions of corruption. *"This money does not go to the Public Accounts It will be used to finance the campaign of the candidate to the*

*presidential election of 2012*, " said Moustapha Dieng , representative of the Union of artisanal fisheries in St. Louis.

Throughout West Africa, anger is brewing. How are they, these factory ships that comb the African seas? The European Union alone, nearly 500 fishing vessels outside Community waters: 160 in Morocco , a hundred in Mauritania , 60 in Guinea-Bissau, forty in Côte d'Ivoire ...

We have to add the freezer trawlers Russian, Japanese, Korean or sailing under flags of convenience ( Belize or Kiribati). Without forgetting ., of course, the Chinese *"Until the mid-2000s, China in Africa operated on real wrecks, now they invest in high-performance boats,* " notes Stephan Beaucher.

More worryingly, after interested exclusively to species of high commercial value, such as octopus or sea bream, foreign fishing vessels now in all directions. *"Chinese and Russian fleets rush past few months on the African small pelagic to do meal for aquaculture,* " says Beatrice Gorez, coordinator of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements in Brussels.

In Senegal, including the fisheries agreement with the European Union has been frozen since 2006, the control of the fish took a more insidious form. *"Thirty European trawlers fishing in Senegal under the national flag, through the company 's mixed opaque "* Beatrice believes Gorez.

To withstand the competition of these trawlers, artisanal fishing is aware that it must modernize its management tools and sanitation. The fishing pier Mbour is still on the ground that the price is trading fish for export, while the Auction-style lab, funded by the European Union, remains abandoned.

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